Living Flesh

Chapter 1

There are many species of fungi, such as *Amanita muscaria*, champignons, and others. What people did not know was that improper waste disposal and the lack of care in separating toxic materials from compostable waste would eventually create a bacterium capable of spreading through fungi in the soil.

Andrea had grown up in Michigan, so she had very little experience with drugs or hallucinogens. Her childhood had been marked by constant relocations, making it difficult for her to socialize with other people. However, when she met Joshua, she discovered an entirely new world.

She traveled with him without her parents' consent and would disappear for days at a time. Her trips with him were some of the happiest moments of her life, until things began to change. Joshua started treating her differently; with each passing day, he seemed more confused, disoriented, and detached from reality. Many nights, Andrea found herself alone in the van, waiting for him to return.

One night, he never came back.

Worried, she called his phone.

“Come on, answer!” she exclaimed.

No response.

She ended the call and left yet another voicemail.

“Joshua, where are you? Please answer my calls. My mother won't stop calling me...”

It was already the fifth message she had left, joining several others that remained unanswered.

Andrea started the van and decided to follow the road. The sky was beginning to darken. Joshua had left that morning, and it was already 6:45 PM. He had never stayed away for so long without saying anything. He always told her where he was going and when he planned to return.

Lost in her thoughts, she failed to notice something suddenly appearing in front of her.

The impact was unavoidable.

The van spun out of control and crashed into a tree.

After several minutes unconscious, Andrea slowly regained her senses. Blood trickled down her forehead, and her lip was split open.

As she looked around, she realized she was stranded in the middle of the road at night, surrounded by dense forest.

She tried to stand, but a sharp pain shot through her body. Dragging herself out of the wrecked van, she discovered that her leg had been fractured. The wound was bleeding heavily.

Sitting on the ground, she tore a piece of fabric from her pants and used it to improvise a splint. A cry of pain escaped her throat.

As she fought back tears, she remembered her phone.

With great difficulty, she crawled back to the van and searched between the seats until she found it. The screen was cracked, but it still worked. She turned on the flashlight.

Despite her fear, she decided to investigate what had caused the accident.

Slowly, she limped back along the road and spotted something lying on the asphalt.

Something split in two.

Her eyes filled with tears when she realized she had hit a deer.

The animal appeared to have already been dying from a strange fungus spreading across its skin. Andrea watched as the last traces of life faded from its eyes. The poor creature had suffered enough.

“Poor thing... You fought so hard to survive, and it ended like this...”

She wept, overwhelmed with sorrow for the animal's fate. Yet at that moment, she knew she had to find help.

Otherwise, she would end up just like it.